

February 16, 2017

Connecticut General Assembly, Appropriations Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 2700
Hartford, CT 06106

Testimony of the American Lung Association in Connecticut in Support of Funding for Tobacco Cessation Services for Medicaid Beneficiaries in the FY2018/2019 Budget

Dear Distinguished Chairpersons and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Ruth Canovi. I am the Director of Public Policy for the American Lung Association in Connecticut. The American Lung Association is a not-for-profit public health association working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease. The American Lung Association strongly supports funding of Medicaid's Tobacco Cessation Program.

Connecticut is one of eight states in the country that offers all seven of the FDA Approved methods for Tobacco Cessation.¹ This is incredibly important as smoking costs Connecticut too much in lives lost as well as health care costs. Every year we lose an average of 4900 people to tobacco related disease. Annual health care costs directly caused by smoking in Connecticut equal more than \$2B.² Smoking related diseases cost Medicaid more than \$500M.³

People enrolled in Medicaid are twice as likely to smoke as those who have private insurance. In Connecticut, 29.3% of people who had a household income of less than \$25,000 used tobacco. 31.6% of people who do not have a high school diploma, while 11.1% of college graduates used tobacco in 2015.⁴

Connecticut can and must do more to help those addicted to tobacco products to quit and to keep youth from going down that path. Funding tobacco cessation coverage under Medicaid is an especially important piece of a comprehensive tobacco control program in Connecticut. Our residents who smoke pay \$3.90/pack and if the Governor's proposed cigarette tax increase is passed, they will pay \$4.35/pack. We know that on average seventy percent of smokers want to quit. We should be offering all the services we can to help them do so.

This investment is a wise one. We urge you to continue this investment in the health of those in Connecticut who need it most. Thank you for your time and consideration. We wish you the best in this challenging fiscal climate and hope we can work together to improve our state's public and economic health in the coming years by making smart investments to combat the effects of these dangerous and costly products.

Sincerely,

Ruth Canovi, MPH
Director, Public Policy
American Lung Association, CT

¹ 2017 State of Tobacco Control. American Lung Association. <http://www.lung.org/our-initiatives/tobacco/reports-resources/sotc/>

² 2017 State of Tobacco Control. American Lung Association. <http://www.lung.org/our-initiatives/tobacco/reports-resources/sotc/>

³ Costs and Consequences of Tobacco Use. Connecticut Department of Public Health. <http://www.ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3137&q=388056>

⁴ Prevalence of Tobacco Use Among Connecticut Adults (18+ years old), 2015. Connecticut Department of Public Health. <http://www.ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3137&q=388056>